

National Agricultural Statistics Service, Statistics Division

MEMBERSHIP BALANCE PLAN

1. Committee's Official Designation

Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics

2. Authority

The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics was originally established by the Secretary of Commerce on July 16, 1962. The Committee is also established in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. App.2.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activities

The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Secretary on the conduct of the periodic censuses and surveys of agriculture, other related surveys, and the types of agricultural information to obtain from respondents. The committee also prepares recommendations regarding the content of agriculture reports, and presents the views and needs for data of major suppliers and users of agriculture statistics. The committee draws on the experience and expertise of its members to form a collective judgment concerning agriculture data collected and the statistics issued by NASS. This input is vital to keep current with shifting data needs in the rapidly changing agricultural environment and keep NASS informed of emerging developments and issues in the agriculture community that can affect agriculture statistics activities.

4. Points of View Needed for the Committee

The Committee draws on the experience and expertise of its members to form a collective judgment concerning agriculture data collected and the statistics issued by NASS. This input is vital to keep current with shifting data needs in the rapidly changing agricultural environment and keeps NASS informed of emerging issues in the agriculture community that can affect agriculture statistics activities. The Committee, appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, consists of 20 members representing a broad range of disciplines and interests, including, but not limited to, producers, representatives of national farm organizations, agricultural economists, rural sociologists, farm policy analysts, educators, State agriculture

representatives, and agriculture-related business and marketing experts. NASS periodically solicits nominations for positions on the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. Members are sought to be distributed among the following seven categories to best represent the agricultural sector: consumer and information organizations; educational organizations; farm service organizations; government agencies; National farm organizations; producer and marketing organizations; and, professional organizations. Nominations were recently sought for 20 open Committee seats. Members serve staggered 2-year terms, with the goal that the terms for half of the Committee members expire in any given year. Members can serve up to 3 terms for a total of 6 consecutive years. The Chairperson of the Committee is elected by members to serve a 1-year term. Equal opportunity practices, in line with USDA policies, will be followed in all membership appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

In addition, NASS has an Outreach Manager who maintains and coordinates communications about NASS Census and Survey programs. The Outreach Manager will also be utilized in distributing information on the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. Every effort will be made to ensure that the membership of this Committee is balanced, nevertheless, USDA recognizes that committee membership is not static and may change, depending on the work of the committee.

5. Other Balance Factors

Equal opportunity practices in accordance with USDA policies will be followed in all appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, membership shall include to the extent possible, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political

beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

6. Quorum Requirements

A Committee quorum shall reflect both balanced membership votes as well as a balance of points of view that are represented within that vote.

7. Candidate Identification Process

A *Federal Register* notice announces the invitation from the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture for nominations to the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. Potential Committee members are solicited by the 12 NASS Regional Directors, 32 NASS State Directors, and their staff, NASS Headquarters personnel, and existing and former Advisory Committee members. Because of the NASS Field Office structure, the national presence in 46 states provides good regional diversity with respect to geographic locations in the solicitation of nominees from across the nation. A national press release is published and distributed specifically to the Community-based organizations (CBOs) network which includes approximately 40 CBOs that NASS has partnered with for previous survey and Census initiatives. Prospective members submit OMB Form 0500-001, Advisory Committee Membership Background Information.

Once candidates have been identified, their names and background data are submitted to the USDA White House Liaison's office for vetting. The vetting process includes a background check to determine if any of the candidates have a conflict of interest that would prohibit them from serving on the committee due to criminal or ethical violations.

8. Subcommittee Balance

The process for determining Federal advisory committee balance on subcommittees is the same as the process for that of the parent Federal advisory committee. If subcommittees are created during the term of the Committee, subcommittee members will be selected based on expertise and professional qualifications relevant to fulfilling the subcommittee's specific charge.

9. Other

10. Date Prepared or Updated

April 7, 2016